Faith & Inspiration

Traditional Value

By Vincent V. Mashburn

In many cultures, sports can be a significant focus of various traditions and diversions.

The participation in and spectating of sports can often become fixations as individuals, families, even entire societies adjust their routines and customs to accommodate popular obsession.

I am not a particular fan of sports myself. In my youth, my father did encourage participation in a variety of "little leagues," I think primarily to provide ample opportunity to demonstrate my distinct dearth of athletic ability. Of all sports, I possess some tolerance towards baseball, while enjoying a general lack of interest in most others. Although I do not follow any specific team and do not pay attention to any league's or season's developments, I can appreciate the intricacies of the game itself. I have even occasionally attended baseball games in stadium with my wife and children, just for the unique live, in-person experience. It is difficult not to acknowledge the communal and festive sense of support and camaraderie in which one is immersed in such a context.

As traditions go, sports enthusiasm might seem relatively innocuous or innocent, promoting teamwork and friendly rivalries. Entire industries have been built on the premise of competition and provincial pride. Within a community or family, a tradition of supporting a particular team can foster a sense of solidarity. But it can also, when taken to extremes, lead to alienation of dissenters. And while it is natural to desire success in any endeavor, when passion for winning comes at the expense of compassion and respect, it can diminish the value of the pursuit itself. This can be true of any tradition that becomes so rigid in its adherence.

In an episode of the "Star Trek: Deep Space 9" television series, Captain Benjamin Sisko confronts an ongoing rivalry with Solok, a former Starfleet Academy classmate and rival. Solok is entirely convinced of the complete superiority of his species, the Vulcans, and considers humans specifically to be especially inferior. In an effort to demonstrate this conviction, Solok challenges Sisko to a "contest of teamwork, courage, and sacrifice" that involves a game near and dear to Sisko's heart: baseball.

Sisko immediately conscripts his senior staff and other members of the space station community to serve on his team, the "Niners," against the Vulcan "Logicians." Among the Niners, only Sisko himself, his son Jake, and family friend Kasidy Yates are actually familiar with the rules and actions of the game. It is with tremendous effort then that Sisko embarks on a grueling training regimen in order to adequately prepare the team for the upcoming match.

While the team overall demonstrates only meager improvement at best, Rom, one of the station's engineers and a Ferengi (another non-human species), fails to develop any effective skill whatsoever at either catching or hitting the ball. In frustration, Sisko, driven by his single-minded preoccupation with defeating Solok (especially in this game which possesses such personal significance), loses patience and dismisses Rom from the team. In his typical fashion, Rom meekly concedes that he might better serve the team as a devotee from the stands.

During the actual game, the Logicians unsurprisingly gain a notable lead over the Niners, with a score of 7 to 0 by the end of the fourth inning. In the fifth inning, Sisko is ejected from the game by the umpire for his physically aggressive argument over a ruling. He joins Rom in the bleachers, and after calming down somewhat, takes a moment to actually watch and enjoy the game, despite his team's inexperience and ineptitude. He is impressed by the remarkable interplay of players and their actions, which, while adhering to strict regulations, also impart a sense of unpredictability and uniqueness to the gameplay.

Indeed, an unexpected sequence of events leads to a Niners player on third base. In a burst of inspiration, Sisko suggests to the batting coach to put Rom back in as a pinch hitter. Despite misgivings from some members of the team, Rom steps up to the plate and inadvertently bunts a pitch. In the ensuing frenzy, the player on third desperately slides into home for the team's one and only run.

The team is overjoyed and showers accolades on Rom and eagerly capitulates to the Vulcans, considering it is now the ninth inning with very little chance of any comeback. In defeat, they are practically giddy with an almost paradoxical sense of victory. It is simply the overwhelming sense of accomplishment, even seemingly paltry, that fuels their elation. Solok is of course quite perplexed at this apparent contradiction.

SOLOK: I fail to see why you are celebrating. The Ferengi's bunt was an accident. And you still lost the game.

SISKO: You are absolutely right. And I couldn't be happier. Quark, a round of drinks for the house on my tab.

...

SOLOK: You are attempting to manufacture a triumph where none exists.

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SISKO: Manufactured triumph. Hear, hear!

NINERS: Hear, hear!

Sometimes, the commemorations and celebrations incurred by an expression of tradition may not seem obvious or sensible to outsiders. We are encouraged to savor the fellowship and affinity that is shared in common through such participation.

The Bible describes the potentially useful and legitimate role of tradition in providing an effective sense of history and remembrance as well as serving as an instrument of social cohesion.

From the earliest instances of sacrificial offerings (Genesis 4:3-5) to the establishment of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 20-27), God bestowed a framework for unveiling his ultimate plan of redemption. These ceremonies and rituals were not designated merely for the sake of spiritual spectacle and ostentation, but were in fact intended to emphasize a regular and recurrent recall of his goodness and work in our lives.

Jesus himself asserted that he was, in body, spirit, and deed, the culmination and fulfillment of all such traditions (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 24:44). He criticized the elevation of traditions of religion over God's word (Matthew 15:3 Mark 7:3-9). He imparted the Holy Spirit as the means by which we are able to transcend and supersede the mere formalities and strictures of institutional and conventional orthodoxy (John 14:16-17, 26).

Even within the era of the New Testament, followers of Jesus were compelled to contend with a general inclination to revert to or innovate customs or practices which were prone to imposing constraints or stipulations on various aspects of Christian belief and practice. In his writings, the apostle Paul spoke out against misguided efforts to emphasize tradition over Scripture and the working of the Spirit, often cautioning us to reject worldly "myths" (1 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:2-4).

As believers, we do well to appreciate the wisdom and experience of those who came before. While respecting the fact that various traditions helped to establish the foundations of our faith and shape its growth, we also understand that we are ultimately led by insight into Scripture provided by the Spirit.

The value of tradition is in how it can guide us in our efforts to live out the Gospel by reflecting moments of community and celebrations of solidarity.

Lifestyle

Accomplishments and Plans for City of Homestead

Mayor Steven D. Losner provided State of the Citty address October 23, 2025 in Homestead City Hall

Photo Credit: Hugh Hudson

By Charlie Hudson

The crowd moving into City Hall on Thursday, Oct. 23, for the annual State of the City presentation could easily see the seven placards behind the podium: "Leadership & Organizational Excellence; Infrastructure Upgrades & Improvements; Economic Developments; Emerging Industries; A Plan for the Future; Placemaking; and The Future Lives Here."

These themes guided Mayor Steven D. Losner's remarks.

Telecast live and later posted to YouTube, the evening opened with the Invocation, Presentation of Colors, and Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the high-energy 10-minute video "Homestead Regional Park – Sport Performance Hub." The video, familiar to anyone who attended the signing ceremony for the future $275 million privately funded project, set the tone for the night.

Camila Varcarcel, serving as master of ceremonies, introduced Guillermo Santa Cruz, president of Homestead-Miami Speedway.

"I took the job in part to give back to South Dade, but the future does live here, and we have a great partnership with the city," he said.

He mentioned several major sporting events scheduled for Miami and smiled as he added, "I came here with the goal of bringing the NASCAR Championship back to Homestead."

With all three championship races returning to the Speedway in November 2026, thousands of fans are expected to fill the stands and millions more will watch from home. He thanked the mayor and council for helping make it happen.

Mayor Losner took the podium to a standing ovation, expressing gratitude for his mother's presence and acknowledging former Mayor Roscoe Warren.

"I was on the dais with him from 2001 to 2007, and I catch myself at times channeling him," he said.

In his address outlining accomplishments, Losner began by thanking the city manager and staff for often-overlooked successes. Roads, water, and waste remain core priorities, and with internal reorganization, the city is now "laser-focused" on measurable results.

He cited one example — a wastewater bypass project that had stalled for years but was completed in under a year, enabling 20 new businesses to open.

Another $9 million in federal funding will go toward widening sidewalks on Krome and Washington avenues, advancing downtown revitalization and the city's long-term vision outlined in the Charrette and Strategic Plan.

Homestead Station is now under new management, and its owners, Losner said, "honor the community."

The upcoming Winter Wonderland event will feature a major celebration in Losner Park, including a skating rink with 3,200 square feet of ice.

"If that doesn't draw people to Homestead, I don't know what will," he said.

The city, as the "capital of South Dade," will also lead a major Fourth of July celebration marking the nation's 250th Independence Day.

The mayor acknowledged that past projects suffered "too many false starts" but said the city has learned from those "hard lessons." A key factor in future success, he said, will be "financial fairness," as emphasized in negotiations for the new sports complex. He noted that high-tech companies in the Park of Commerce will bring sustainable jobs to the region. Despite state and county restrictions limiting local authority, the city remains committed to progress.

Financially, Homestead passed the state's DOGE review with no findings and has built its reserves to $30 million — twice the recommended amount.

Discussing public safety, Losner said, "A safe, clean community with unsnarled roads is our common goal."

The new police chief Mario Knapp has focused on careful hiring, bringing the force to nearly 150 officers, and expanding code enforcement. Two general obligation bonds appearing on the November ballot will fund roadway, bridge, and park improvements. The mayor urged voters to approve both measures.

In closing, Losner praised the city manager and staff, noting "a new spirit among our employees for this city."

He extended appreciation to their families and the City Council, recognizing the long hours involved in public service. He ended with heartfelt thanks to his wife "for being by my side all these years," prompting a second standing ovation.

Details on the two bonds can be found at https://homesteadfl.gov/762/General-Obligation-GO-Bond-2025.

On Nov. 4, voters within city limits will have the opportunity to approve up to $76 million in bonds to invest in critical community priorities — $35.8 million for park improvements and $39.1 million for roadway and bridge projects. If approved, the bonds would fund major infrastructure upgrades, expand recreational spaces, and support modernization throughout Homestead.